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## European dis/integration in times of complexity – reassembling Europe in the 2014 protests and plenums in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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ARTICLE



## European dis/integration in times of complexity – reassembling Europe in the 2014 protests and plenums in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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### ABSTRACT

This paper problematizes European dis/integration from the location of Southeast Europe, particularly social and political struggles of the 2014 protests and plenums in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The European project is understood as a product of multiple assemblages to transgress various binaries that capture the European Union as a unitary entity and define the conceptual work on European integration and disintegration. In its central argument, the paper suggests that the political and everyday practices and claims articulated by the protests and plenums help us rethink the peripherality of Bosnia and Herzegovina vis-à-vis the European project and therefore also the spatio-temporal and institutional boundaries of the European project.

### KEYWORDS

European disintegration;  
assemblage thinking;  
Southeast Europe; protests  
and plenums in Bosnia and  
Herzegovina

### Introduction

There is an emerging scholarly effort to problematise shifting socio-political conditions and governance practices in the EU along the integration/disintegration binary (Vollaard 2018). This scholarship argues that the mainstream EU integration literature remains focused on economic institutions while neglecting societal forces and mobilisations and is vulnerable to pro-integration biases (Jones 2018). In response, European dis/integration is reframed along the continuum of internal institutional consolidation/differentiation on the one hand and external boundary construction/reconstruction on the other (Börzel 2018; Webber 2014). Accordingly, the European institutional order (what the EU is) is stabilized and given meaning in relation to the EU's exteriority; events and processes that have been rendered disorderly and external to the integration discourses and practices (what the EU is not).

Most disintegration literature sees this exteriority as institutional, political or societal deviations within the EU-proper. In contrast, this article wonders how we can rethink disintegration or crises not as lapses in the EU's institutional order but as something that operates outside of the dis/integration and dis/order binaries, while focusing on how the EU is (re)assembled vis-à-vis its spatio-temporal exteriority. It employs Deleuzian reading of multiplicity and assemblages to discover new questions about the EU and make visible uneven continuities and discontinuities that stand outside of the dis/order and therefore also dis/integration binaries (Deleuze and Parnet 1987; Deleuze and Guattari 1977).

EU dis/integration is discussed from the spatio-temporal location of the recent wave of contentious politics in Southeast Europe (SEE). Insights from the 2014 protests and plenums (citizen assemblies) in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) are adopted to analyse how Europe is reassembled in

the commons struggles and the commoning practices of citizens. By asking how Europe is reassembled in the 2014 protests and plenums, one observes how what is seen as orderly unfolds in what is seen as disorderly and vice-versa and how uncertainty, instability, and contingency can concurrently disrupt and (re)produce the European political project.

## European dis/integration and multiplicity

The analysis moves away from the conceptual thinking about the European political project through the unity/differentiation and order/disorder dialectics and the consequent discussion of European dis/integration as a lapse in a particular institutional order. The adopted references to Deleuze and Guattari connect this paper to works that draw from Latour's (2005) Actor-network theory and DeLanda's (2006) complexity theory to conceptualise European integration in terms of infrastructural connectivity's (Badenoch and Fickers 2010), security or border assemblages (Salter 2019), or policy translations (Clarke et al. 2015). At the same time, the paper does not advocate a new systematic way of studying Europe. Rather, it is more interested in looking at multiplicity and assemblages as a mode of critique of treating the EU and European integration as orderly and given (Acuto and Curtis 2014; Ong and Collier 2005). What is put at stake is the position and status of multiple differences (exteriorities) in the production of multiple Europe(s).

Accordingly, the paper discusses European dis/integration from a stance that how the European institutional order is produced, maintained and ruptured needs to be problematized also in relation to and from the location of the EU's spatio-temporal exteriority. It suggests that the boundaries against which this exteriority is produced are messy, fluid and multiple. To account for this messiness, this paper is interested in how Deleuze and Guattari's (1977) problematisation of order through multiplicity and assemblages can steer new questions about processes conceptualized as European dis/integration. Multiplicity does not mean multiple or plural identities but ever-changing and non-totalisable connectivities and discontinuities. The European project is not just a complex system with many realizations, but is an active site of different, non-hierarchical and oftentimes contradictory processes at work (Biebuyck and Rumford 2012). One should, therefore, study the European project as continuously (re)assembled by coming together of heterogeneous social, material and other forces. More specifically, assemblage thinking enables one to decentre Europe from a given (institutional and spatio-temporal) embeddedness. This implies an analytical commitment to asking how the EU is assembled not only against, but also with and from, the location of its many exteriorities. The EU's relations with its exteriority (be it institutional and/or spatio-temporal) are viewed as rhizomic (i.e. fluid and multiple-rooted) rather than binary. Rather than thinking about the European political project through questions of integration and disintegration, the analysis shifts to connectivities, reoccurrences, discontinuities and contradictions and from here emergent entanglements and new political and social formations in three analytical commitments.

First, the paper sets to discover how Europe is assembled and reassembled empirically from ground-up to account for processes and constellations that escape what is signified by the concept of European integration and the subsequently produced spatial and temporal understandings of Europe and its *others*. Rather than thinking about the European project in terms of linear continuities, ruptures and renewals, the analysis shifts to marking contingent and *strange* reoccurrences and encounters. This approach emphasizes questions related to what assemblages do – how different assemblages come together, endure or are discontinued – over inquiring/assuming the essence of a European political order. Second, this also means that boundaries between European/non-European, but also integration/disintegration are questioned. Cultural, economic or infrastructural assemblages through which Europe is articulated and enacted cannot be delineated within a binary between the institutionally fixed *order* and the externalized *disorder* as we miss relational formations and practices that not only rupture (subvert or distort), but also express, legitimate and restore Europe. At stake are local entanglements through which boundaries of Europe are constituted, stabilized and destabilized. Third, assemblages do not privilege human

over non-human constellations. This implies that there is a distinct materiality that co-shapes spaces, institutions, and experiences of Europe. Inquiry then moves to how infrastructural, technological, bureaucratic or affective connectivities reassemble Europe on their own right rather than through a particular political deliberative process.

The established effort to study European dis/integration from the location of SEE is particularly interesting because of the region's *indeterminate* position vis-à-vis the EU. Contrary to political and institutionalized efforts to stabilize the European political project against the positioning of SEE as the EU's fixed spatial (e.g. the Schengen/non-Schengen), temporal (e.g. transition and catch-up narratives) and institutional (e.g. accession framework) (semi)periphery – which are adopted by for instance the analytical distinction between European integration and (external) Europeanization – this paper posits that the location of SEE vis-à-vis the EU should be problematised from the perspective of indeterminacy. The institutional (*lack of full membership, but bound by the acquis*), cultural/spatial (*the Balkans as neither West nor East*) and temporal (*postsocialist, pre-EU*) constellation of SEE vis-à-vis the EU shows a degree of indeterminacy that cannot be neatly placed within binaries that maintain the EU's institutional order. Contradictory trajectories of the SEE's socio-political conditions and everyday experiences – colloquially described as a permanent meantime or life put on hold – cannot be fully captured by the established categories of postsocialist or pre-European (Majstorović and Vučković 2016). The relationship between the (post)socialist and (pre) European is both and concurrently one of continuity and divergence (Gržinić 2014). In relation to the question of European dis/integration, the location of SEE provides an analytical space to make sense of complex connectivities, contradictions, and tensions that question the conceptualisation of the European project as a liner progress towards a given institutional order against which other processes are viewed as disorderly and disrupting normalcy.

Institutionally, SEE has been linked to the EU particularly since the outlining of the region's EU membership prospect at the 2003 Thessaloniki Summit, whereas Europeanisation process surpasses the institutional framework of EU accession through complex policy assemblages and encounters between multiple sites, scales, actors and discourses (Jansen, Brković, and Čelebičić 2016; Lendvai and Stubbs 2015). Particularly the EU's involvement in BiH and Kosovo exceeded the enlargement framework. Socio-political institutions, infrastructures, and territories of SEE countries are increasingly incorporated into the EU's governance regimes (Neuman Stanivuković and Neuman 2019). Whereas these and other instances of *disorderly* governance practices remain captured by the scholarship as cases of the EU's asymmetrical and differentiated regulatory practices and de/Europeanisation, they at the same time open up the question how various contingent connectivities and reoccurrences between the EU and its spatial, temporal and institutional exteriority produce and sustain the European project (Lavenex 2015).

The analysis of how the EU is reassembled in its exteriority is grounded in social mobilisations that took place in SEE from 2006 onwards. These mobilisations are classified as commons struggles due to a shared commitment to the protection of social and environmental commons, support for participatory politics and bottom-up solidarity, and a radical critique of neoliberal policies in the form of student and workers' protests, struggles for urban commons and environmental struggles (Mattei 2013). The analysis examines how the commons struggles have exposed the otherwise silenced and created new material and discursive connectivities and reoccurrences between SEE and European integration. The paper takes a close look at the 2014 protests and plenums in BiH, as one of the most radical cases of contentious politics in SEE. Protests and plenums are studied as common struggles because they attempted to reclaim and democratically govern factories, resources and public spaces as commons through participatory and collective deliberation. They stand out because first, they took place in BiH whose politics are substantially influenced by European and other international actors, second, they violently ruptured the solidified post-Dayton ethno-nationalist political order, and third, they prefigured new socialities and politicalities in a local and European context. My analysis offers a small-scale exploration into novel questions and forms of inquiry that are opened by the established effort to think the EU through fluidity and

multiplicity of assemblages. I rely on a rich ethnographic record of the protests and plenums in addition to a textual analysis of official EU and national documents and reports, press and media reports, and my own ties to the academic, civil society and grassroot communities in SEE including frequent visits to the region and fieldwork in March/April 2016 and 2017.

## European dis/integration and BiH's protests and plenums

Protests and plenums started as workers' demonstrations in February 2014 in Tuzla and have then intensified to become the largest act of grassroots citizen mobilisation in post-war BiH. Between February and March, the protesters have organised themselves into over 20 plenums. The plenums drew from growing civic activism in the region throughout the mid and late 2000s, particularly student blockades and assemblies in Zagreb, Belgrade and Tuzla, and they connect to a broader cycle of protest movements in Europe which have through popular assemblies and use of deliberative politics challenged European and national institutions and governance. The strength of plenums has gradually diminished and the movement became practically invisible by the summer. Four cantonal governments resigned in the aftermath of the protests, but the protests and plenums did not bring about a substantial change in the political or economic structures of BiH. Still, the established practices and experiences of enacting alternative forms of socio-political relations and demanding social justice against negative experiences of *transition* matter for both BiH and EU.

Protests and plenums emerged in the context of BiH's multiple peripherality and marginality stemming from the 1992–1995 war, the post-Dayton state-building and peacebuilding in which the international community was strongly involved, and related politico-economic restructuring widely framed as Europeanisation and democratisation (Majstorović, Vučkovac, and Pepić 2015). The fact that protests and plenums can be contextualized as concurrently a product of and a reaction to the assemblage of BiH's post-war, postsocialist, and European trajectories speaks to how the EU's institutional order unfolds (through particular continuities, reoccurrences, and ruptures) in its exteriority. While the claim that the EU's institutional structure was directly challenged and transformed by protests and plenums is difficult to maintain considering the distinctiveness of the protests and plenums to BiH's context, the provided considerations push the discussion on European dis/integration outside of the dis/order binarism by arguing that the European project is reassembled against but also with and from the location of its multiple and fluid externalities. The argument is introduced in three propositions, with each proposition presenting different constellations of discourses, affects, norms, rules and compliance standards and material, institutional and financial infrastructures *at work* in reassembling the European project from the location of BiH.

### Proposition 1

The first proposition suggests that protests and plenums have challenged the stabilisation of complex Europeanisation assemblages into one European *order* against BiH's post-war, postsocialist and/or pre-European (disorderly) *transition*. The context in which protests and plenums have emerged and how they narrated and enacted BiH's socio-political conditions make visible how the European *order* unfolds in the postsocialist *disorder* by differentiating political from market-building reforms and the subsequent depoliticization and technocratisation of social discontent.

BiH's integration with the EU was formalised with the articulation of the SEE's EU membership potential at the Thessaloniki Summit and with the signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA), but the EU has built up its presence in BiH ever since Dayton. Complex political, economic, and security configurations were brought together under the umbrella banner of BiH's integration with the EU; these range from the Office of High Representative (OHR) supervision of political and civil processes under Dayton (which was temporarily merged with the office of the EU's Special Representative (EUSR)), the EU's, NATO's and UN's administration of security and police reforms,

the OSCE's and EU's democratisation and election monitoring, the EBRD's investments into public and private infrastructures, and the EIB's, or the World Bank's and IMF's role in the country's financial restructuring. BiH's democratisation, judiciary, and market liberalisation reforms are furthered through a number of policy dialogues with the EU on trade, taxation and industry, internal market, transport, energy, and justice, freedom and security. Many segments of this dialogue are strengthened via financial conditionality and assistance under IPA. BiH participates in EU programmes including Creative Europe, Erasmus+, and Horizon 2020 and it has ratified the Energy Community Treaty, the European Common Aviation Area Agreement and the Transport Community Treaty.

These multiple assemblages produce vernacular entanglements of European dis/order in BiH. To illustrate, EU's norms, rules and regulations are translated and moulded in BiH by loose networks that operate outside of the clearly demarcated EU/non-EU, private/public or informal/formal orders. The SAA and related progress targets and monitoring analytics operate through decentralised networks and disciplinary methodologies, which routinise democracy and citizen participation in technocratised governance spheres. Europeanisation frameworks focused particularly on electoral and institutional reforms amidst ECtHR's Sejdić-Finci judgment, prevention of corruption and discrimination, and market competitiveness are differentiated through specialised assemblages and prescriptive methodologies for sectoral reforms and then translated into depoliticised project-based work in the areas of rule of law, anti-corruption, or civil society capacity development. This includes an assemblage of international professionals (operating through CoE conditionalities, the EUSR/OHR's civilian and financial restructuring, the European Commission's Structured Dialogue on Justice, the OSCE, GRECO, the Venice Commission, the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council, OLAF), donor networks and increasingly the inclusion and empowerment of state-level and sub-national agencies and experts (i.e. Anti-Corruption Agency, Center for Civic Initiatives, Agency for Cooperation, Education and Development). Because, through the work of these reform-assemblages, rule of law, corruption, and extensive administration are articulated as main impediments to both democratisation and a functioning economy, political and institutional reforms are translated and legitimised as market-building efforts around economic and monitoring surveillance networks and related standardisation; political and economic *acquis* is assessed and differentiated through the EU's accounting framework ESA 10, the OECD's competition assessment, World Bank's surveys or the IMF's Extended Fund Facility.

Such configurations make invisible continuities between inadequate and malfunctioning political institutions, on the one hand, and demands for deregulation and liberalisation of the economy grounded (not only) in the EU's pre-accession strategies and funds on the other. Uncertainties and struggles related to the de/re-industrialisation, privatisation and the erosion of welfare structures are understood not as market-building discontents but as faulty governance by corrupt ethnonational elites and associated to postconflict traumas and lacking democratic institutions and traditions (COM 2015, 29). Corruption, unaccountability, inefficiency, and incapacity became catch-all terms for tackling BiH's *transition*.

The resulting separation of political and economic rationalities of *transition* – intensified by the normative differentiation between the orderly *acquis* and *disorderly postsocialist transition*, diminishes the transformative potential of social discontent against privatisation or de/reindustrialisation. Discontent is concurrently reframed into ethnonationalist narratives by political parties and arising clientelist networks and removed from the social sphere and then managed by technocratised Europeanisation networks which include professionalised and project-based work of the civil society sector and ("Donor Support" 2012; "Mapping Study" 2016). Complex subjectivities and multiple social struggles are silenced by the positioning ethnonationalist institutions as a key obstacle to greater accountability of the state and BiH's EU membership and then depoliticized under the procedural language of strategic frameworks, risk-assessments and measurements of the administrative, political and financial capacities for reform implementation ("Bosnia-Herzegovina-EU" 2014).



Contentious politics of protests and plenums emerge from but also disrupt this constellation by making visible socio-political relations that stand outside of the established distinction of the European order from the external *disorder*. The core focus of the protests and plenums to re-articulate complexities of BiH's *indeterminacy* outside of the constellation of postsocialist ethnonationalism and European technosphere exposes the multiplicity of the European order. In the voiced critique of technocratisation of democracy and civil society, protests and plenums indicated how norms and *acquis*-based regulation and standards, which signify the European order, are moved and moulded by dispersed assemblages and are entangled with different formal and informal local socio-political forms and everyday strategies of citizens to make sense of their lives ("Politika" 2014; "74<sup>th</sup> ZCDP" 2014). As such, they can be understood as a space where the European project is negotiated, reproduced and reassembled.

Activists have accounted for the protests and plenums as a culmination of and a contradiction to the post-Dayton order (Jourdan 2014). Disentangling various meanings and flows of privatisation were prioritised. Protests and plenums have articulated BiH's indeterminate spatio-temporal position defined by an absence of progress, stability and normalcy between war, which has not fully ended, and European integration, which is not fully achieved ("2<sup>nd</sup> Sarajevo Citizens' Plenum" 2014). They enacted a social reality of *transition* which was *always-already* known but was silenced by the co-existing discourses of nationalism on the one hand and civil reconciliation, multiculturalism, and tolerance on the other. In doing so, they have made visible how dominant narratives of BiH *transitioning* from ethnonationalism to European order suspends politics and possibilities for social struggles and change. Kurtović and Hromadžić (2017) show how political decentralisation, economic liberalisation and ethnonationalisation of the state enabled deindustrialisation and rising inequality and silenced possibilities of imagining BiH's future outside of the postsocialist/European frame.

Protesters' recourse to the language of hunger and rage of the people – expressed through discursive acts such as 'we are hungry in three languages', 'when they hit us with identity, we hit back with bread', or 'who sows hunger reaps fury' – has discontinued BiH's positioning in the post-Dayton ethnonationalism (Kurtović and Hromadžić 2017). It enabled new modalities of critique that destabilise the ordering of BiH's socio-political location at the post/war/socialist and pre-European binary. Under the broader banner of social justice struggles, protests and plenums have uncovered how rationalities and technologies of European integration translate and depoliticise the systematic and legalized theft of the industrial complexes and national resources, social stratification and economic exploitation as problems of anti-corruption, human rights and rule of law reforms (Husanović 2015). The Tuzla workers' demonstrations, which preceded the protests, have through a series of actions including factory occupations, hunger strikes, marches and attempts to reach out to local, national and international actors reclaimed the political sphere by positioning social struggles for the factory, work and ability to produce at its centre ("Workers of Dita" 2014). Following the experiences made visible in the public sphere by the factory workers and the popular uprisings that proceeded them, plenum participants have mapped and contested multiple rationalities at work that have produced the given socio-political locations of BiH. These rationalities included the dismantling of the public sector as inefficient and corrupt, the demarcation of the economic from the political sphere, and the consequent internalisation of these rationalities in the languages and practices of transition-driven reforms ("Radnici govore" 2014).

Reordering of the Europeanisation assemblage in BiH becomes particularly visible in the plenums' rejection of hierarchical modes of political organisation, technocratised language of project-reforms and consequent NGO-isation of civil society (Imamović 2014). Protests' enactment of collective indignation and plenums' new forms of social and political engagement challenged efforts of Europeanisation assemblages – formed around proceduralised peaceful reconciliation, discourses of tolerance, multiculturalism and democratisation – to active *apathetic and divided citizens* by institutionalising and empowering the civil society sector (Arsenijević 2014; 45). While acknowledging that they know and understand the *language of Europe*, activists have also critiqued it for creating spatio-temporal constellations of linear development and short-term performance



measurements, which provided for *stability* at the expense of justice and fairness (Jourdan 2014). Hence, against the normative position that BiH's society needs to be *activated* to participate in good governance in response to ethnonationalist politics, the protests (including their violent outbreaks through the burning of governmental buildings) and plenums have deliberated and demanded different modes of democratic transparency and accountability.

## Proposition 2

The second proposition argues that the European project was reassembled by protests and plenums through the production of entanglements that stand outside of the linear temporality of BiH's postsocialist *past* and European *future*. The text illustrates how protests and plenums have transmitted elements of the socialist imaginary to embody/prefigure democracy and transethnic solidarity outside of the language and practices of democratisation, market-liberalisation, and reconciliation.

European integration discourses and domestic memory politics critique workers' self-management or social-property infrastructures as residues of the *old regime* obstructive to post-Dayton statebuilding and to liberal democracy and market-economy (Kurtović 2019). This hampers the critical potential of socialist experiences to counter post-war divisions and irregularities of socioeconomic restructuring. By politicising experiences, materialities and rationalities of work/workers, the factory, and commons struggles, plenums disrupted the established position of European integration as the only viable alternative to the discontents of *transition* and enacted and prefigured socio-political and spatial formations outside of the ethnonationalism/EU binary. Plenums have prefigured social and political formations that stand outside of the binary differentiation between the European order and its disorderly exteriority, which connects them to various mobilisations and movements across Europe.

Protests started as workers' protests in Tuzla. Tuzla and its factories can be read as spaces where the narratives of multiethnicity, class consciousness and economic progress intersect with everyday experiences of labour, which continued also in the postsocialist period. Having one of the largest industrial complexes in former Yugoslavia and a legacy in labour mobilisations, Tuzla was celebrated as a bastion of class struggles. Growth of mining and chemical industries contributed to the creation of an ethnically heterogeneous population. As one of the most populated areas of BiH (also due to an influx of internally displaced people during the 1992–1995 war) and having suffered severe consequences of the post-1990s deindustrialisation, Tuzla became a convergence point for the largest but also the most critical mass of the unemployed (Kurtović 2015). In Dita, Konjuh or Polihem factories, workers' struggles and workers' self-management, defining to the construction of a Yugoslav collective imaginary, were transmitted to postsocialism through industrial infrastructures and in the mundane practices of workers being and acting *in common*. This included claims to the right to produce, instalment of democratic controls over labour and production processes, or meal-sharing and spending time together in the factory ("Radnici govore" 2014).

Protests and plenums have positioned worker-subjectivities and the factory as discursive and material spaces that disrupt the post-Dayton ethnonationalisation of citizenship and governing structures that have enabled wholesale privatisation and flexibilization of the labour market (Imamović 2014). Whereas inequalities and societal divisions were not foreign to socialism, these were consolidated in the figure of a worker-subject. Workers were concurrently represented as epitomes of transethnic unity and the consequently arising multi-ethnic class consciousness and of resistance to regimes of power (Petrović and Hofman 2017). Work as a dual marker of transethnic belonging and resistance was maintained in the workers' protests across BiH and has made possible the *en-masse* mobilisations of the 2014 protests and opened space for the prefigurative politics of the plenums and the consequent reframing of citizenship and solidarity beyond ethnicity (Arsenijević, Husanović, and Vasić-Janeković 2017). Protests gained a momentum once the workers were joined by the unemployed, the students, the war veterans, the teachers, other public-sector

employees and many others. Indignation against their own and others' suffering and precarity was the main motive for people to join the plenums ("Manifest" 2014). As such, they have renegotiated work as a discursive space and embodied practice that transcends ethnonationalist divisions ("9<sup>th</sup> Tuzla Citizen Plenum" 2014). Plenums transmitted tropes of worker-subject and factory as a common in the enactments of inclusive citizenship and transethnic solidarity, horizontal politics, and efforts to reclaim public spaces as commons. As such, they should be interpreted as acts of socio-economically, ideologically and at times ethnically diverse multitudes assembling and constituting themselves politically through many (at times conflicting) performative constellations of past experiences of citizenship, solidarity and being *in common* to hopes for a better future. To illustrate, plenums were open to all individuals to express an opinion and vote, while any form of representation through political parties, NGOs, unions or other formations was not allowed. The horizontal and inclusive nature of the gatherings has enabled citizens to collectively mourn the traumatic past and envision a joint future, whereas these practices were previously contained within the private sphere or mediated by various domestic and/or European power assemblages (Jansen 2014).

Similar continuity between socialist imaginary and the protests and plenum's prefigurative politics is seen in the protests' (re)construction of a factory as a common and consequent claims to the commons and practices of commoning. Testimonies of protest and plenum account for a strong feeling of the workers belonging to the factory which they have 'lost' but whose 'productivity and profitability they have built' (Ibrašimović 2014, 27). The affective economies of desperation caused by the loss of the factory, jobs and years-long precarity due to systematic infringements of labour law pushed workers to the streets where they were ultimately joined by other citizens. Because factories were interchangeably closed, occupied, and reopened over years, to produce and to protest became the same, which was internalized as part of the workers' everyday experiences ("Workers of Dita" 2014). Workers' occupation of the factory which started in 2012 has intensified this enactment of the factory as a common through joint practices of tent-making, but also the mundane practices of being-in-common through, for instance, drinking coffee and sharing food (Busuladžić 2014, 16–17). Factory was reconfigured as a common space that mirrors the workers' own and the country's past and through which the future needs to be rebuild (Ibid. 11–12). Similarly, plenums – as performances and perfigurations of different ways of being in common politically – were organized as public gatherings in the community, cultural, sports and youth centres, squares and university halls, while protests in front of factories and governmental buildings continued ("Manifest" 2014). Accordingly, similarly to the potentiality of a factory to steer resistance and alternative politics, plenums were spatialized in sites that carried a dual infrastructural and symbolic encounter of socialist common ownership on the one hand and commodification/privatisation and ethnonationalisation of public space and public property on the other.

Renewal of the worker-subject and factory as commons in relation to the radical potential of plenums' prefigurative politics of citizen self-organisation, horizontal decision-making, and co-creative institutions has not only destabilised the temporal fixing of the BiH in-between of its socialist and war *past* and European *future*, but it also points to the emergence of multiple temporal and geographical constellations of European dis/order. This refers to the reworking of BiH's *future* at the intersection of split rationalities of socialist experiences and European aspirations. Performative, prefigurative and material elements of protests and plenums have made up new socialities and politicalities and new geographical and temporal constellations that escape normative demarcations of the European project in opposition to SEE.

Protests and plenums have connected experiences of self-organisation and workers' self-management and the commons struggles to demands for adherence to European values, functionalisation of governance, and convergence with European rules and standards ("1<sup>st</sup> Bihać Citizens' Plenum" 2014). *Being in common* as a mode of struggle and a form of political and social assembling in conjunction with emerging plenum-networks repositioned BiH as a space of emergent radical politics. The emerging transethnic, transregional and transeuropean geographies and

spatial constellations of non-institutional politics challenged the linear continuity of Europeanisation and *transitology* narratives of disorderly SEE moving towards orderly EU by pointing out how the European order – through its apolitical, technical, procedural assemblages – becomes stabilised and reproduces itself in the disorderly postsocialism, while also reassembling Europe from its (multiple) peripheries around particular connectivities between lived (imagined) socialist past (workers' struggles, self-management, social ownership of the means of production) and alternative European future.

Protests and plenums worked outside of the binary between the European and postsocialist disorder; whereas rationalities of European integration were echoed in the continued positioning of the *acquis* as a benchmark for reforms demanded by the plenums, they were concurrently discontinued in inserting and prefiguring new material and discursive spaces of contention (e.g. factory, worker-subjectivities), new manners of speaking and acting politically (e.g. horizontality, use of new communication technologies), and forming new geographies of networks guided by rhizomatic principles including rejection of abject poverty or struggle for the commons. It is symptomatic that whereas direct references to EU institutions were limited to some protest banners calling the EU to help citizens' struggles and whereas EU flags were generally absent from the protests, when asked about the possibility of EU representatives Ashton and Fülle visiting Sarajevo in response to the perceived destabilisation of the country, plenums responded that anyone is free to participate by raising a hand ("9<sup>th</sup> Tuzla Citizen Plenum" 2014). The plenums' demands merged the critique of market-building through dual technocratisation and ethnonationalisation of the political and social spheres, and asked for a revision of privatisation including the *return* of factories to workers, with continuous reliance on the EU's standardisation of political and administrative reforms, accountability, and rule of law.

Protests and plenums have untangled BiH's spatio-temporal location between of the *socialist past* and *European future*, which opened the way for the production of new geographies around activist networks of (radical) commons struggles *at* and *from* the location of a European (multiple) peripheries. Contentious politics of protests and plenums emerged at the intersection of wider (European) popular resistances to neoliberal transformations amidst the 2008 economic crisis and related austerity policies and the reconfiguration of the SEE's postsocialist, European (semi)peripheral location. The established continuities between particular tropes and lived experiences of socialism and the articulated hopes for a different (European) future opened discursive and material frames for redetermining BiH's spatio-temporal position as the EU's semi(periphery), but one that can provide a radical response to what is seen as *neoliberalizing EU*. Although the 2008 economic crisis has certainly accentuated the otherwise silenced grounds for protests, in BiH, the crisis has been far more durable and practices of social and political struggles were more embedded in the lived experiences of socialism and were also more violent. One should note that whereas protests and plenums looked alike the indignados movement or Greek anti-austerity mobilisations, patterns of connectivity and circulations of styles, communication practices, and spatial organisation of public assembling among these movements were not (only) direct.

On the one hand, protests and plenums connect to broader anti-austerity mobilisations and movements through the circulation of particular repertoires of contention and *being in common* such as the symbolism and materiality of a tent, joint street marches, occupation of public spaces, horizontal and deliberative forms of decision-making or the use of mobile struggles technologies such as live-streaming or video-conferencing that transcend divisions established by various territorial or institutional formations. On the other hand, particularly activist scholars summoned around the Subversive Festival and the Balkan Forum Network were key in translating and circulating the contentious politics in SEE including protests and plenums as broader commons struggles around class-consciousness, social justice and resistance to neoliberalism (2014). In March 2014, the openDemocracy platform republished an article by Horvat and Štikš, who acted as coordinators of the Balkan Forum, where they place BiH in the context of neoliberalizing Europe amidst the EU's austerity policies and link protests and plenums and commons struggles in SEE to

anti-austerity protests within and outside of the EU. BiH was (re)positioned as Europe's avant-garde periphery, which concurrently showcases scenarios of unrests in other European cities against economic impoverishment, social devastation and political destitution and the potential of ungovernable populations to struggle for a better future. The articulated need for a radically democratic European alternative was further circulated by the activist left-wing platform 'LeftEast' and trans-European civil society network 'European Alternatives' and connected to anti-austerity movements in Spain, Portugal, Slovenia and Greece, or environmental struggles in Bulgaria (Balunović 2014). Protests and plenums were supported by left-wing (mostly Europe-based) intellectuals who – in an open letter – linked the protests and plenums to Tahrir, Zuccotti Park, Taksim or Syntagma and demanded the EU and the US to recognize the widespread rejection of ethnic divisions and neoliberal policies and to recognize that the international project in BiH has failed (Jukić 2014). In subsequent years, the Subversive Festival has gathered a network of film-makers, activists, public intellectuals, and journalists in Zagreb under the theme 'Spaces of Emancipations – Micropolitics and Revolution'. In November 2014, participants of the Dita factory protest and plenums together with researchers, activists, and protagonists of different experiences of self-management took part in a workshop 'Production and Commons' organised by the progressive left network 'transform! europe,' which positioned the link between work and commons struggles in the protests and plenums in a wider European framework.

### Proposition 3

Burning of the administrative buildings at the outbreak of protests has actualised the indeterminacy of BiH that stands outside of the linear spatio-temporal trajectory of moving from the postsocialist dis/order to European order. Despair and angst about the post-Dayton economic and political discontents have in the violent outbreaks become part of public consciousness. Plenum participants have referred to unrests as an attempt by citizens to transgress the Dayton order by collectively voicing their rage, fears, needs and desires ("13th Sarajevo Citizens' Plenum" 2014). Unrests became a radical force that has made visible the otherwise silenced and normalized despair that defines the everyday and has enabled the emergence of new socialities and politicalities. Accordingly, distinction between orderly Europe and disorderly (post)socialism that was maintained in the rationalities of BiH evolving towards a *stable* and *normal* EU collapsed in the protests and plenums; the unrests – rather than as a rupture in a particular order – became a way of exposing complexities of enduring *transition* but also opened the potential for enacting different formations of *normal life*. Against this background, the third proposition argues that the transformative potential of protests and plenums was stabilized in efforts of European actor-networks to restore/reassemble Europe in the renewed differentiation between (structural and explicit) violence as a defining feature of postsocialist disorder and market-based rationalities and governance practices articulated around the Compact for Growth and Jobs.

Although we see a clear effort in preserving the status-quo, the immediate response of international actors to the protests and plenums was somehow disoriented. This coincided with the work of BiH's elites to reinforce ethnonational political narratives and return plenums' normative claims to the sphere of institutionalized politics. In an obscure reaction to the protests, the High Representative Inzko toyed with the possibility of deploying EU troops if looting and destruction continued. In a follow-up press release, Inzko offered a soberer response ("The Voice" 2014). While condemning violence, he called for restoring functioning and resilient institutions through Europeanisation-driven reforms. Such differentiation of the protests and plenums between violence on the one and demands for functioning institutions on the other hand has enabled dual legitimisation of the European regime vis-à-vis the citizens; as a safeguard against violence (of the police and/or the rioters) and an answer to the discontents voiced by the protestors against unemployment, corrupt governments and ill-functioning institutions.

A more explicit shift towards economic rationalities of market-building came already in spring 2014. The Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) has referred to the protests and plenums as a call for improved social and economic conditions. Social justice claims were translated as claims for economic recovery. The saliency of political and constitutional reforms was maintained but these were now placed under the EU's umbrella strategy for employment and economic growth. In April 2014, FAC articulated a new economic telos of BiH's EU integration focused on fiscal and economic restructuring to tackle unemployment and create a business-friendly climate (FAC Minutes 2014). It introduced the Compact for Jobs and Growth as a key instrument in assisting the government in achieving these goals (Ibid., 2). The Compact was further supported by the German-British reform initiative, which tied the proposed socio-economic reforms to EU membership progress. The objectives of the Compact were then incorporated into national legislation as a National Program for Economic Reforms.

Specifically, tensions between the depoliticization of European market-building efforts in BiH on the one hand and its politicisation in the demands of the protestors and plenums for greater transparency and accountability on the other were reconciled in the Forum for Prosperity and Jobs that preceded the Compact. The Forum can be seen as a node for the actor-network that has emerged in the post-plenum European assemblage in BiH. Forum participants had a critical role in constructing the renewed objectives of the EU's involvement in the country. They were also involved in defining the implementation of these objectives through performance benchmarking and monitoring. The Forum was facilitated by the EUSR Sørensen as a further step in the already announced shift in the EU's approach. It brought together some 400 participants including governmental representatives, international institutions, domestic and foreign economic experts, businesses and civil society organisations. Next to Sørensen and Inziko, the speakers included other high-ranking officials such as German Foreign Affairs Minister Steinmeier, Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Babacan, Danielsson from DG Enlargement and local political elites including Izetbegović, Lugundžija and Bevanda.

The Forum was convened as a two-day conference with an agenda set on reform strategies for market competitiveness, growth spurt and employment. A follow-up seminar was held in July to translate the Compact into implementation strategies and action plans. International representatives have expressed saliency of the economic reforms for the EU's enlargement. National elites also argued that economic reconstruction is essential and that they are committed to this goal. The conclusions of the Forum were endorsed by the IMF, the World Bank Group, and the EBRD. The event was praised by the media as the most comprehensive public consultation on the future of BiH's economy.

The Compact, related documents, and events echo protests and plenums by addressing the *people* as main beneficiaries and as the political force that is to push for reforms. However, the Compact also reproduces rationalities, problem-diagnosis mechanisms and reform-implementation strategies of the European order. Tracing knowledge claims about protests and plenums renders visible how the EU's institutional order was restored in opposition to the postsocialist *disorder*. Experiences, procedures and conditionalities of the EU's financial crisis management (articulated in the EU's 2012 Compact for Growth and Jobs as an adjunction to the Fiscal Compact) were now linked to the maintained logic that instable and corrupt political institutions of *transitioning* BiH lead to economic hardship and precarity. The Compact circulated economic rationalities of competition and growth through liberalisation and flexibilization of the market and labour legislation, progress monitoring and reporting technologies, through a network that connects the EUSR, EU member states to, international financial institutions, donor organisations and global consultancies such as ECORYS. These were then bridged to the established implementation strategies (e.g. action plans) and monitoring apparatus (e.g. progress reports) of EU accession and the language of Europeanisation as reform-driven catching-up with the EU, while rendering BiH citizens as vulnerable subjects but also those that are to overcome corrupt elites ("Address" 2014)

Renewed depoliticization and technocratisation of the European project in BiH is visible in a recourse from social justice or economic fairness towards strategies on how to re-structure relations between the political sphere and the arising reform-assemblage (Majstorović, Vučkovac, and Anđela 2015). Reforms appear pragmatic, non-ideological, and inevitable. Market-building practices were placed outside of the political sphere and processed through an assemblage of accession-driven institutional and administrative reforms, conditionalities of international financial institutions, the formation of independent agencies, and re-installment of the EUSR coordination processes and tools. Normalisation and depoliticization of market-building reforms was intensified by the maintained representations of BiH as the EU's *lagging-behind* and *not-yet European other*.

## Conclusion

The paper adopts assemblage thinking to question the conceptual category of European dis/integration by examining how European dis/order is reassembled in the performative and pre-figurative politics of the 2014 BiH protests and plenums. It suggests that the institutional (lack of full membership, but bound by the enlargement *acquis*), the cultural/spatial (the Balkans as neither West nor East) and temporal (postsocialist, pre-EU) indeterminacy of BiH vis-à-vis the European order, critiques conceptual and theoretical accounts of European disintegration. It suggests that protests and plenums have made visible complex continuities and discontinuities between the (post)socialist and *becoming European* spatio-temporal location of BiH vis-à-vis the EU that escape binary distinction between orderly Europe and its disorderly exteriority. The paper subsequently calls for a reconceptualization of the European political project as a production of multiplicity through fluid encounters with variegated externalities. Against this background, rather than asking if and how *events* in SEE can be conceptualized as cases of European integration or disintegration, the paper maps how European order is reassembled in protests and plenums in three propositions. The first proposition argues that the protests and plenums have made visible the continuities between the BiH postsocialist and European trajectories. Protests and plenums have emerged at the intersection of postsocialism, post-conflict state-building and accession-driven Europeanisation. This indeterminacy of the BiH condition challenges the imagined binaries between the postsocialist *transition* and Europeanisation and teleological accounts of European dis/integration. The second proposition points to continuities between the socialist imaginary on the one hand and practices of reassembling Europe in the 2014 protests and plenums on the other. The third proposition outlines how the transformative potential of the protests and plenums was normalized in the shift from political to economic rationality of EU governance in BiH.

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